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## ***DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN NATIVE SPEAKER–NONNATIVE SPEAKER CONVERSATION***

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This study analyzes informal native speaker (NS)–nonnative speaker (NNS) conversation to see what types of NNS error lead to what types of NS response constituting negative input available to the NNS. This study further examines the differential effect of the NS response on subsequent NNS speech in a given conversation.

In their consideration of rule fossilization, Vigil and Oller (1976) claimed that a certain minimum, although unspecified, amount of “corrective feedback” from a NNS’s interlocutors’ indication of comprehension problems or needed changes in the form of the NNS’s utterance is necessary for the continued development of a NNS’s interlanguage (IL). Selinker and Lamendella (1979) pointed out, however, that it is necessary to distinguish potentially available feedback and corrective feedback that is actually part of a NNS’s intake.

Schachter (1984) suggested that it is necessary to consider not only corrective feedback on the form of a particular NNS utterance but also the broad range of what she calls “negative input,” any information provided to the NNS that “something has gone wrong in the transmission of a message.” On one end of the continuum this information may occur as explicit corrective feedback, an indication that there is something unacceptable to the native speaker about the form of a comprehended message. At the other end, it may occur as an indication

that the NNS's utterance was not comprehended. In between lie implicit corrective feedback, confirmation checks, and clarification requests.

In research on French immersion classrooms, Chaudron (1977) found differential short-term effects in learner response for variations in one type of error correction—repetition—by teachers. It may be the case, then, that different types of negative input may have different effects on NNS speech as well.

The availability to and the effect on the NNS of negative input is relevant to any theory of second language acquisition (SLA) that includes the concept of hypothesis formation and testing on the part of the NNS. Schachter (1984) draws attention to a phenomenon observed and labeled blank trials laws by Levine (1975). In Levine's research, in constructing and revising conscious hypotheses related to problem solving, learners treated no response from the experimenter in the same way they treated responses of "right." Responses of "wrong," on the other hand, caused learners to change their hypotheses. As Schachter points out, negative input may have a similar effect on the NNS's unconscious hypotheses about the rules for generating the target language (TL), and lack of negative input may serve as affirmation of a NNS's incorrect hypotheses. However, available negative input can potentially have a modifying effect on the NNS IL only if it is, in fact, part of the NNS's intake. In other words, only input that is both comprehensible and being attended to can possibly produce alterations in IL forms.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The present study was undertaken to investigate possible relationships between certain types of errors—errors in lexis, phonology, and morphosyntax—made by NNSs in informal conversation and the ways in which their NS interlocutors respond. In addition, possible relationships were sought between the different types of NS response to errors and subsequent alterations in NNS speech in a given conversation. It was hypothesized that corrective feedback occurring in side sequences would influence subsequent NNS output to a greater degree than corrective feedback occurring in NS responses that did not disrupt the main line of conversational discourse. This was motivated by the assumption that participants' attention to form should be greater in side sequences, when the flow of communication is threatened.

The research questions addressed, then, were as follows:

1. What types of NNS error lead to what types of NS response constituting negative input available to the NNS?
2. What relationship exists between type of NS response and subsequent NNS speech in a given conversation?

## METHOD

### Data

Twenty-three NS-NNS conversations were analyzed in this study. Seventeen were recorded by students enrolled in beginning and intermediate classes at Hawaii Pacific College (HPC) and six were recorded by advanced learners enrolled in the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, both institutions located in Honolulu, Hawaii. The native speakers were asked to record informal conversations of approximately 20 minutes on topics of their choice with NS friends outside the classroom. These conversations formed the corpus for an earlier study of repair techniques (Chun, Day, Chenoweth, and Luppescu 1982).

### Analysis

After the conversations were transcribed, errors were agreed on by the raters acting in consensus. "Error" was defined for the purpose of this study, following Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985), as "the use of a linguistic item in a way, which, according to fluent users of the language indicates faulty or incomplete learning of the TL."

Every NNS turn containing an error or errors was identified. The ensuing NS turn was then classified according to the categories of NS response illustrated in the constructed example in Figure 1.

Numbers 1a and 1b are categories of moves that continue the main sequence of the discourse in terms of topic. In both instances the NNS's message has been clearly comprehended. However, category 1a contains implicit corrective feedback in that the error in the NNS's statement has been

NNS: I goed to New York yesterday.		
Continue main sequence	1a	NS: I went there yesterday too. (+ corrective feedback)
	1b	NS: It's a nice town, isn't it?
First move in a side sequence	2	explicit correction (+ corrective feedback) NS: You went. (declaratory intonation)
	3	message checks
	3a	NS: You went yesterday? (+ corrective feedback)
	3b	NS: Yesterday?

FIGURE 1

transformed to its TL form because it happens to be used by the NS in his or her response to the NNS. Category 1b, on the other hand, does not contain this implicit corrective feedback.

Categories 2, 3a, and 3b, on the other hand, are the first moves in side sequences. We use the term side sequence, following Jefferson (1972), to indicate a break in the main topic of conversation that is directly related to it. Category 2 constitutes explicit corrective feedback. It is a response to the form of the NNS's message. The NS's declaratory intonation indicates that the NS has clearly understood the message (or believes so). This NS response contains and emphasizes the TL version of the errorful item, and the provision of the TL form is the major thrust of the NS's turn.

Categories 3a and 3b are also the first moves in side sequences, but they are message checks, indicating that the NNS's utterance has not been clearly understood or clearly heard. Category 3a includes confirmation checks or clarification requests that happen to contain the TL form of the errorful item and thus contains implicit corrective feedback. Category 3b does not contain the TL form and therefore does not contain implicit corrective feedback on the form on the NNS's errorful item. It does, however, indicate to the NNS that "something has gone wrong in the transmission." This category also includes clarification requests without the TL form, as in, for example, "Where?"

After extensive practice sessions, and careful agreement of errors, an interrater reliability coefficient of .95 was obtained for coding the NS responses according to the above categories using Cohen's formula for kappa to correct for chance agreement (Cohen 1960, Frick and Semmel 1978).

The NNS turn immediately following an NS response falling into any category except 1b was then analyzed for NNS reaction. The NNS turn immediately following a response falling into categories 1a, 2, and 3a was examined to see if the NNS correctly or incorrectly repeated the supplied TL form and/or used it productively. If this occurred, the supplied form could then be said to be reliably part of the NNS intake and to have had an observable effect. The NNS turn immediately following a response falling into category 3b was examined to see if the NNS recoded an errorful item into a TL form. The NNS's subsequent speech within the remainder of the same conversation was checked for observable effect, that is, for TL or non-TL use of the supplied form. Errors were separated into errors of lexis, phonology, and morphosyntax. Differential effects for error type on NS response were sought, as were differential observable effects on NS speech of different NS response types.

## RESULTS

Comparing errors in morphosyntax with NS turns that continue the main line of discourse, morphosyntactic errors were found less likely to result in a side sequence than other errors ( $\chi^2 = 9.08$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ). On the other

hand, lexis errors were more likely to result in side sequences than other errors ( $\chi^2 = 9.87$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ). Phonological errors did not appear to be related to a particular type of NS turn ( $\chi^2 = 2.96$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.25$ , ns).

TABLE 1 Relationship between Error Type and Type of NS Turn Following a NNS Error

NS turn type	1a	2	3a	3b	Total
Lexis	5	12	14	12	43
Phonology	12	10	15	11	48
Morphosyntax	29	7	8	17	61
Total errors	46	29	37	40	152

TABLE 2 Error Type vs. Sequence Comparisons

	$\chi^2$	df	
Morphosyntactic errors vs. sequence type	9.08	1	$p < 0.005$
Lexis errors vs. sequence type	9.87	1	$p < 0.005$
Phonological errors vs. NS turn type	2.96	1	ns

Differences in observable effects were tested ( $\chi^2$ ,  $df = 1$ ) but were found to be not significant (see Tables 2 and 3) in the following four areas:

1. Main sequences as opposed to side sequences (1a + 1b vs. 2 + 3a + 3b)
2. Explicit correction as opposed to implicit correction (2 vs. 1a + 3a)
3. Explicit correction as opposed to meaning checks (2 vs. 3a + 3b)
4. Implicit correction, main sequence as opposed to side sequence (1a vs. 2 + 3a)

TABLE 3 Relationship between Number of Occurrences of Incorporation and NS Turn Type

NS turn	1a	2	3a	3b
Observable effects:				
raw	6/46	7/29	12/37	2/40
%	13	24	32	5

TABLE 4 Observable Effects Comparisons

	$\chi^2$	df	
Main sequence vs. side sequence	0.596	1	ns
Explicit correction vs. implicit correction	0.0002	1	ns
Explicit correction vs. meaning checks	0.464	1	ns
Implicit correction, main vs. side sequence	3.02	1	ns

## DISCUSSION

The significant relations between type of error and ensuing NS turn shown in our data apply to lexis and morphosyntax. They may reflect the different potential each has for communicative distress. Lexical errors are more likely than others to trigger a side sequence in which an attempt is made to clarify the message. Morphosyntactic errors, perhaps because of their lesser communicative significance, are more likely to permit the main line of discourse to be continued.

Whether repetitions or cases of productive use, few effects of the NS response were observed on subsequent NNS conversation. No pattern regarding type of NS turn most likely to produce an effect of any kind on the IL emerged, even though, at the very least, the extra attention focused on the error by a side sequence might have been expected to lead to a significant relation.

Even when the definition of corrective feedback is expanded beyond that used in the Chun et al. (1982) study to include other sources of "negative input" besides explicit correction, an extremely small proportion of errors receive any kind of response that is potentially destabilizing. Of the 152 that did, in only 26 cases was an observable effect exhibited, even when this category includes mere repetition. This suggests, *prima facie*, the weakness of corrective feedback as an aid to acquisition. Consequently, the failure to observe significant relations between observable effect and NS turn type is not surprising.

## CONCLUSION

Obviously, the *n* size in this study is small, and the ILs were followed for only, at a maximum, 20 minutes after any potentially destabilizing event. However, the general implications run contrary to those of a theory of SLA based on concepts of hypothesis testing, or the need for NS feedback as an important source for IL destabilization, unless the processes involved are conceived as gradual in nature.

It may also be the case that attention needs to be given to the effect of task. We have observed (though not quantified) examples of incorporations following NS provision of corrective feedback following error when conversation takes place in the context of communication games. The significant difference here is probably that the situation prevents the topic's being switched, dropped, or avoided, with the result that far more attention is directed, over a longer period, to a particular area in which the IL is deficient. This impressionistic observation would suggest that ILs *can* be quickly destabilized, if sufficient attention is given to the area in question.

By focusing on corrective feedback to linguistic errors contained in an NNS turn, the analysis used in this study does not capture every instance of corrective feedback. Discourse errors and errors of fact were not included. Also excluded were instances of what might be termed comprehension errors, as illustrated in the following examples from the corpus:

- NS: How long will you be going to this school?  
NNS: Uh from this year. Last — last September.  
NS: No. How long *will* you be going to this school  
NNS: oh yeah  
I don't know. I don't know. Maybe four or five years at least.

Furthermore, in limiting our analysis of potentially available corrective feedback to that contained in NS turns immediately following the NNS turns containing errors, corrective feedback provided at the end of a side sequence was not included, as in the following example:

- 1 NS: What ki- what size bed do you have?  
2 NNS: I don't know. I don't know the inches, you know.  
3 NS: No no. Is it just- Is it for one person or two people?  
4 NNS: One person.  
5 NS: Single.  
6 NNS: Single yeah single.  
7 NS: Mm. I should look around.  
8 NNS: I have two single beds.

Since the NNS utterance in line 5 did not contain a linguistic error, neither the NS suppliance in line 6 of the correct lexical item nor the NNS's TL productive use of it in line 8 was coded.

Finally, by looking only for TL or non-TL use of the supplied form, our analysis did not capture alterations in the IL form subsequent to corrective feedback, as in the following sequence of corrective feedback occurring in one conversation:

- NNS: Uh how- how do you feel Taiwan?  
NS: How did I like it?  
NNS: Yeah how do you like it?  
.  
.  
.  
NNS: And how- how do you feel the Taiwan uh New Year?  
NS: You didn't let me finish my question- your question. You asked me how do I like Taiwan what do I think about it.  
.  
.  
.  
NNS: ... LaiLai (a department store in Taiwan). Do you know that?  
NS: Yes I went to LaiLai.  
NNS: How- how about you feel?  
NS: My feeling?  
NNS: Uhhuh

The results of this examination of the immediately observable effect of corrective feedback contained in various types of NS response must be considered in the light of the phenomenon, which Schachter (1984) draws attention to, called processing time. A learner may require a certain amount of

time to make use of negative input, and in the interim will continue to operate with old, as-yet-unmodified hypotheses.

A related phenomenon was observed by Nelson (1980) in a study of intervention input and first language acquisition of tag questions by children. During an observation session, one of the children, a 3-year-old, used a tag question for the first time "20 hours and 37 minutes after the child had last heard an experimenter's use of a tag question." Since the child's parents were reported virtually never to use tag questions with the child, Nelson assumed the original tag question formation occurred, after a considerable amount of elapsed time, as a result of the intervention input.

It is reasonable to assume that if a NNS repeats a supplied form correctly or incorrectly, or uses it in subsequent speech in a TL or non-TL manner, then that supplied form is part of a NNS's intake. On the other hand, it is not reasonable to say that if he or she does not use the supplied form in any way, then the corrective feedback is not part of the NNS intake. Thus, while we have been looking for observable effects of corrective feedback on NNS' ILs, and have not yet found much evidence of such effects, their absence in the short term does not necessarily mean that they do not exist over time.

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## DEVELOPING BASIC CONVERSATIONAL ABILITY IN A SECOND LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF AN ADULT LEARNER OF PORTUGUESE<sup>1</sup>

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This chapter is a descriptive, analytical study of the development of conversational ability in Portuguese by one subject during a 5-month stay in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The chapter attempts to deal with two basic issues: (1) the kind and amount of language that was learned in order to communicate with native speakers, and (2) the ways in which both instruction and conversational interaction contributed to learning the language.<sup>2</sup> The chapter is based on two data sources. The learner, the first coauthor of this paper, hereafter referred to as R, kept a journal throughout his 5 months of exposure to Portuguese, recording whatever seemed on a day-to-day basis the most salient aspects of his learning experience. As in numerous other diary studies, R recorded his experiences and observations only semisystematically, in greater or lesser detail at various times, and with varying time intervals between events and the journal entries reporting them. Some conversational exchanges were written down within seconds, while other events were recorded at the end of a day or even several days after the fact. Many of the entries deal with communication and learning